

Admirable Goals, Questionable Means

*A Response to The Tripartite Committee on Civil Society United Nations Economic
Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)
Re: a Proposed Free Trade Area of the Americas*

by

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Executive Summary

Thesis

The Miami Declaration of Principles and Plan of Action calls for action towards the attainment of several highly desirable societal goals, that must in turn be achieved as the results of public policy. These goals as stated throughout the Declaration are:

1. The advancement of prosperity for all peoples in the Americas
2. The strengthening of democratic values and institutions
3. The preservation of the security of the hemisphere
4. The maintenance of the peace.
5. Respect for Human rights and the rule of law.
6. Respect for the rights of minorities and elimination of discrimination based on race, gender, nationality or religion.
7. The promotion and defense of constitutional democratic rule.
8. The elimination of corruption and the trafficking in illegal substances in the hemisphere.
9. The participation in political, economic and social activity in accordance with national legislation.
10. The attainment of social justice for all people through improvements in access to quality education and primary health care.
11. The eradication of extreme poverty.
12. The improvement of the wages, incomes and working conditions of all people.
13. Strengthening the role of women in all aspects of political, social and economic life.
14. The protection and preservation of the environment and especially threatened ecosystems on the continent.

The above goals as stated in the Miami Declaration are all admirable. However, there is not one single policy proposal of substance behind them as represented by FTAA literature made available to the public via the Internet, including the process elucidated in the San Jose Declaration. ' In the context of the proposed FTAA they are empty words, devoid of substance and robbed of meaning because the Miami Declaration treats the terms as meaningless buzzwords to defend a policy of liberalized trade *at the expense of the stated goals*. The presumptions of the Miami Declaration are so ridiculous as to seem simplistic: *that trade in itself will provide for all of the 14 goals in the absence of an 'y specific multilateral or government policy towards those ends, and tinder the auspices of a secret agreement negotiated behind closed doors without the approval or oversight of national legislatures*. The supporting materials for the proposed agreement, such as the study by the Inter American Development Bank, list various constitutions of

¹ FTAA web site / www.ftaa-acla.org,

member states as barriers to trade, including the constitution of Canada, as it takes precedence over the laws of Canada, which are judged to merely regulate investment.²

This paper will discuss the above 14 goals with respect to the process set out in the San Jose Declaration as compared to the results of liberalized trade on a global basis, citing examples of the impact of liberalized trade in several policy areas. The opinions of experts in trade and policy areas will be cited extensively to prove that liberalized trade works in direct opposition to the above-mentioned 14 goals of public policy.

Examples will be drawn from actual experiences of peoples, governments and institutions currently dealing with the consequences on trade liberalization, particularly NAFTA, on their societies and lives.

The paper makes the following conclusions:

1. Liberalized trade is in nearly all respects incompatible with the 14 policy goals of the Miami Declaration.
2. National, Provincial (or State) and Local Governments are the appropriate level to execute real policy towards the fulfillment of the goals of the Miami Declaration, *not the process as set out in the San Jose Declaration*.
3. The implementation of the proposed FTAA would have the effect of creating another unaccountable layer of bureaucracy or government over and above that of national governments, and thereby render each nation's constitution and civil protections ineffective, as such protections will probably constitute a 'barrier to trade.'
4. The proposed FTAA is in direct conflict with Articles of the UNI Declaration of Human Rights.
5. The participating heads of government are not accurately representing their policy goals to constituents, based on the above conclusions which are impossible not to draw, given the experience cited in this paper.

The paper concludes with the following recommendations to Governments:

1. That all negotiations towards an FTAA be immediately halted pending the political development of a broad public consensus regarding national goals in each of the participating countries in each of the stated areas of public policy cited in the Miami Declaration.
2. That the negotiating text of the proposed FTAA be immediately made available to the general public in each OAS member state in English, Spanish, French, Portuguese, and in minority languages where appropriate in South America so that all peoples may truly know what their governments are doing.
3. That Governments pass into law a declaration of sovereignty such as the proposed Citizen's Trade Oversight Act of Canada to immediately reestablish democratic parliamentary, legislative and congressional control over international trade agreements.
4. That Governments of OAS member states immediately implement the Tobin Tax on international speculative investment.
5. That Governments of OAS member states commit themselves to implementing domestic policies which will bring the stated goals of the Miami Declaration closer to reality for the vast majority of the people of the Americas, and that these governments establish a fund towards this end from monies collected via the Tobin Tax.

² Inter American Development Bank, Foreign Investment Regimes in the Americas: A Comparative Study, pg. 57.